

# ALL THE SMALL DEEDS

*The Outing*

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## *The Outing*

It would be harder to tell it like this; it appears I have no choice. This wasn't the first time that Joshua's death had made problems for us. There were days when this simply didn't happen; but that was some time ago, even a long time ago. It was in the days when Johnson Summers took his 'friends' on outings every Sunday; Johnson arranged everything, they just needed to show up. Their usual meeting point was exactly eighteen miles down the highway from Tremens Pass. I remember what they told me Johnson said on that particular occasion, a few days before they set off. It was the only time I had actually paid attention to any of his outings: He told everyone that this would be the best outing they've had so far. It's as simple as that. But it's not that simple. Joshua was with them that day. Dan Cranston had told Joshua that he ought to come along, about a week before that. I don't think Joshua thought twice about it. I don't think he thought about it at all. If Dan said it would be fine, then cool. It wasn't like Dan had a calming influence, 'cause he didn't. Dan was just another semi-fucked up kid as far as I was concerned. I didn't see anything unusual about it. But the story is really this. Josh just simply didn't come back. He died up there. He fell to his death. Of course there was a hearing on the case. They said Josh had fallen off Dagger Cliff. It was only several minutes into the outing, they said. Obviously, given Dagger's proximity to the meeting point, which was also the departure point, also obvious. They could step from there right onto the granite. I never talked to the Dan kid after that, that I can tell you. Just another fucked up twenty-eight year old juvenile strung out on acid most of the time. Fuck him. Judge Clifford never made a big thing out of the whole matter. For me it was hard to tell what category of hearing exactly Clifford had assigned it. Fuck him. Johnson lives in a big house now just on the outskirts of town. The mother-fucker even got married. I've got to tell the truth here. I always thought Johnson was a faggot.

I was in San Francisco one time with my Uncle Ant. He killed himself a couple of years ago. It was sheer coincidence that I got to meet two homosexual men while we were there. They were invited to dinner by the lady we were visiting. They were a pair. I personally found the two to be nice people, caring and genuinely interested. There was even something ethical about them that seemed to me very different from anything I had seen before, something that would be alien to heterosexuals. So of course, they were gay. I found 'gay' to be just fine, as I say, even special. But Johnson was pure faggot. I don't like the epithet any more than you do. But I can't find another one that satisfies my disdain for that

bastard. "Killer," maybe. "Rapist," "Fucker of his mother." I'd remove my little finger for you, if that's what you wanted, just to get me out of that hatch. I truly would. Joshua should not have fallen off of that cliff.

## *I Told Mama to Come Up*

I told Mama to come up. There was a pause. "Boy," she said. I asked her why she had caged the elephant. "It done hurt me again." There was a pause.

"Didn't hurt you none Ma. That's just your mind."

"No Boy," she said. "It done hurt me."

I walked up to the bedroom where Ma usually slept. I wanted to see the elephant.

I always thought Ma was joking about her killers: Two blonds. Male. Early twenties. Dad dead on the bed. They had bludgeoned him to death.

It hadn't always been like this, you know. Dad had always been a difficult man but he was capable of understanding certain things even as he ignored the rest. I do believe that he tried to do his best for Ma in his own difficult way. I don't know if he ever loved her. I don't even know if it was she who was the pure reason for him turning away. Anyway, whatever Dad may have had in him before, it was not there anymore, and he had turned away to somewhere else. Either it had been too weak to stay or he had applied a lot of effort to draw it out of himself and keep it at bay.

In those things Dad was good: the darker things; the things that for other men would be difficult. And he probably ended up bludgeoned to death for it.

Then there was Dan. Dan was articulate. Dan got on well with Mama. Mama really liked Dan. He'd nudge her up sometimes with funny stories. Dad laughed at them too. It was like Mama came back for a while each time.

On an afternoon Dad and Dan were drinking beer on the porch. Dad went in to the house for something, probably for some cigarettes. Then Dan moved around to me and told me that Mama's great grandmother had been a witch.

I asked Dad about it later. He said, "Yeah." Then he paused for a minute. Then he said: "Did you know that Dan's got one part Cherokee?"

I said I didn't know about that. Then he turned his head away from me and drank his beer.

It doesn't matter to me now. There's an elephant in every room. I think that's what Dan wanted to tell me.

## *They Are' A Flyin'*

I went out with my Uncle Ant on a walk one day. He said, "Boy." I said, "Yeah Ant." He said, "Look yonder." He pointed. There was a flock of geese. "Nice, Ant. Nice, Ant." "Aint it," he said. "It sure is," I said; emotional intensity, coming out of me. "You think so?" asked Ant. "I said I did," I replied. "You did do that," he responded. "Yeah I did Ant. That's right." Again, emotional intensity coming out of me. "Deed," he said. "Whatcha see over there?" he asked. He had already pointed where I should look. "Nothin'," I said. "Nothin'?" he asked. "I said *nothin'*" I told him. I was waiting for the usual, but I was angry. It came out of me. "Nothin'" he said. "That's right. That's what I said." "That's what you said before," was his retort. "I said it again, then." "Clear," he said. "No argument with that," he said. "What's your problem, Ant?" "I gotta a problem boy?" "You do," I said. "You're repeating yourself again," was his retort. "No shit, Ant." "Clear," he said. "What do you want, Ant?" I said. "Nothin'. *Nothin'*" he said. "I don't want nothin' from you, boy," he said. I was in no mood now. "Look yonder Ant," I said. "Looking yonder," he said as he peered in the direction I had indicated. "You see them geese?" I asked. "See 'em," he affirmed. "They are'a flyin'," I said. "Indeed they are, boy."

## *Jerry and Ant*

"Hey' Ant."

"Hey' A."

"Where's your nuph?"

"Don't know. He aint here."

"Well you're his Unc. He lives here."

"I don't where he is and I don't know where he goes and Jerry you got weird words: Unc, Nuph. What's the matter with you? What's the matter with you anyway?"

"I like 'em Ant. Anything the matter with that?"

"Yeah: When other people gotta listen to 'em."

"No one ever said not'in' to me 'bout it."

"That's 'cause they don't wanna hurt yer feelin's. You might as well say Bukakak when you say good morin' to Mrs. Summers."

"You're a mean man sometimes Ant."

"No, I hurt yer feelin's Jerry, that's all. Just tellin' you like it is."

Ant pauses, thinking, and then is serious in tone, mysteriously solemn, a surface of five words given only by a cruel dispensation of unutterable properties:

"Cause I'm yer friend Jerry."

"Well thank you so much for that. I'm gonna go now. Still wonderin' where

your nuph is."

"You get on out of here Jerry. Come back when you got normal words and reasonable questions."

Someone guffawed and then spat six times, it sounded like it came from the barn: 'Nigga cum white Jerry Brown. Mrs. Summers. He wants to start a school of thought. He wants a million followers. He wants to finish it before he dies. But it will be too late. Because with his death will come his demise. That's what happens when yaw fake it.'

I think Ant killed Jerry. I don't know. Clifford didn't do this case.

Same DA, different judge.

What the fuck. One day off two years to the day of Joshua's fall. But that's only forensics; Josh's body was a definite mark in clocked time. No one clocked Jerry's. Body found, time of death estimated; not in hours, in days. So either it happened the same day or it didn't, and that, folks, is what's so cynical about tautologies in forensics.

Now, why Nigga Cum? Well, why the fuck Homo Cum? I see that I need to spend some time resting. Still, why Homo Cum? Cum Laude? No, Cum Johnson Summers. That's right, I circumnavigated, to this: Johnson Summers killed Jerry. He had the two blond kids knifed to death in prison. Mother-fuck got away with it all. I think I'll kill Johnson now. I think it's about time. And how do I know, when the DA and the Judge and Jury didn't? You don't want to know. *Because of Ant! That's the only reason! It was the only way!*

## *'Cept for the roar*

'Cept for the roar of my crucified Uncle Ant arms flailing crushing the whore until she died.

"The horror. The horror of the whole Tent. The Tent of Mankind," my Uncle Ant said.

"Ant, I want you to stop that."

"That's good boy. It's good."

"I mean it."

"So mean it."

"I've tried, Ant."

"So you've tried."

Appalachian I did once in my life *many times* with my grandfather. I tackled the land. I hooked the trout. But the anxious nose for trouble I had suited me just fine, and just as well it did; or not, perhaps. I don't know. And I don't care.

And it was in that way that I departed so often; a wild cat distressed by

the drunk and gunful men raping the forest and urinating beer and stringing up crude hammocks for the carcasses of their kill, which were mainly gutted deer.

That was her mind though fields tilled by weak men; she could be bread winner, callous as our thoughts are—never ending. She was right in that. It was an achievement.

Appalachian I did many times in my wife *many times* with that whore. She wasn't the whore though; not her, not my wife. The whore was another. Wet from the womb then man's smile in the dirt. 'Cept for the roar of my crucified Uncle Ant—arms flailing crushing the whore until she died. No, *No*: The controlled mayhems took me out of the lines and into the heart of Agamemnon. You do not do that with anybody unless you want to lose your gut and see it spun by spiders. Agamemnon's floor was certainly littered. There is no way Out. You Cannot Go Away from that After Doing That. Why is this not clear to people? *No*, you cannot Speak. And where do you think you would get the rights? There's no cosmic censor for you. You're doned'in. I am going to be a bit vicious: Look, this is what it's going to do to you: It is—as—a pocket watch broken up by scissors in outer space. You look scared. You can't feign a righteous display of surprise. Well no, you wouldn't. *O Ant!*